DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 013 CE 057 961

AUTHOR Burton, Lucy G.; And Others
TITLE Change Impact--Building a Rural Telecommunications Network.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (Salt Lake City, UT, October 28-November 3, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Change Strategies; *Communications Satellites; Distance Education; Extension Education; Higher Education; Models; Networks; *Organizational Change; Resistance to Change; Rural Areas; *Rural Population; Telecommunications; Universities

ABSTRACT

A framework to consider a successful change effort in an organization consists of four elements: conditions for change; manner of initiation; road blocks or facilitators; and lasting results. A specific case study in which this framework can be applied is the process of change in one university. While the immediate manner of initiation was an authoritarian act--the purchase of satellite equipment by one department head--the conditions of change already existed in that a broad base had built up over time for the use of telecommunications to serve rural communities. External forces that led to the initial change effort were the structural economic changes in rural areas and changes in the work force and subsequent training needs. Internal forces included striving within the university and in the state for funds and recognition. Although goals were initially unclear and no input was collected from other levels of the organization, telecommunications programs to outreach sites were subsequently incorporated into the overall mission of the university. Facilitators of the project were a major training effort, creation of television production positions, and resource development. Lasting results were the redistribution and reallocation of funds to use satellite television programming and more collaboration and cooperation with other institutions for the service of the common constituencies, the rural communities. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED332013

CHANGE IMPACT--BUILDING A RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

Lucy G. Burton
Ronald M. Jimmerson
James S. Long

Washington State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L Burton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE057961

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AAACE Conference
On Trial: The Education of Adults, October 28 - November 3, 1990

Change Impact - Building A Rural Telecommunications Network

Lucy G. Burton, Distance Learning Coordinator, Extended University Srvcs,
Ronald M. Jimmerson, Associate Professor, Adult and Continuing Education
James S. Long, Professor, Adult and Continuing Education, Extension Specialist-Program and Staff Development,
Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164-5220 509-335-7878

How can a university with a land grant mission become more responsive to the changed environment in rural areas? How can the Cooperative Extension organization itself change within to better support rural development needs? Are we being accountable to rural communities and to rural adults? The education of adults is on trial.

Organizational Change: what are the causes, the processes, the important issues related to change? Our concept is to document the process of change in one organization with the acquisition of a satellite network. Specifically, how does an organization become "**technically** and **managerially** equipped to utilize telecommunications to serve rural communities?"

Public institutions are bombarded with the need to change from outside forces. How can we predict whether an organization is ready for change? Is there leadership for change? Is there training support? Is there consensus on objectives?

We are going to apply four considerations to interpret successful change efforts. (1) Consider the conditions leading up to an attempted change, the environment of external and internal forces. In observing case studies of successful change patterns, we observe that the organization is usually under considerable external and/or internal pressure to improve long before change is contemplated and management seems to be groping for a solution to its problems. (2) Consider the manner in which the change was introduced. Three patterns are observed, a unilateral authoritarian decision, by shared power, or by delegated authority. Success patterns more often incorporate decisions by shared power. (3) Consider the critical blocks and/or facilitators encountered during implementation. Successful change efforts are noted by their consistency. The change is spread throughout the organization to include and affect many people. A careful diagnosis of organizational problems is made. Ideas and solutions are

developed at many levels of the organization. Those are tested for solving problems on a small scale. The change effort spreads with each success experience and as management support grows it is gradually absorbed permanently into the organization's way of life. Power redistribution is critical within the structure of an organizational change. (4) Finally, consider the more lasting results which appear over a period of time. People behave more effectively in solving problems and in relating to others. This results in improved organization performance.

These four considerations can be seen as interrelated phases. Let's apply a metaphor from nature and observe the life of a tree to elaborate on the four considerations above. (1) What are the conditions in the environment: soil, moisture, sun exposure, nutrients? Is there bare ground or space for a new tree to grow? (2) How will the life of a new tree begin: from a seed, as a young transplant, regrowth of an established root? Will it be planted by a single individual or by a team effort? (3) What things will facilitate the life of the tree and which factors will interfere: rain, compost, care and management, frosts, drought, insects, disease? (4) What results can be expected: fruits and nuts, barren yield, several years of development before fruiting?(See Diagram)

Taking this model as a framework let us examine our observations about a specific case study. We also invite you to reflect about an experience in your world to apply this framework to your own work or plans. You may want to jot down a few notes related to each consideration as we work through our example.

Case Example: Many **external** forces led up to the initial change effort in our example. The strongest force has probably been the structural economic changes occurring in rural areas, including the reduction in agricultural populations and in resource based economies, and the changing needs of rural citizens who are isolated from participation in a global economy and the information age. The availability of communication technology and its use elsewhere may mean that rural areas that do not participate will be left behind. And finally, the changes in the workforce and subsequent training needs establish an economic basis on top of the moral one to provide life-long learning everywhere, including rural communities. **Internal forces** in our case experience that may have contributed to change include striving within the university and in the state for funds and recognition. New rural development needs and agendas are called for as a

result of the community structural changes. The promise of technology as a tool to reach a new and broader constituency in an era of declining budgets and staff is very attractive. Cooperative Extension's new Director was excited about communications technology. In deciding how to use surplus funds from salary accruals, he purchased a receive dish and receiving equipment for each county. A one-time pocket of money could be an internal force that contributes to the conditions ripe for change.

Our model suggests that the **manner in which change is introduced** may strongly impact change efforts. In this case unilateral, authoritarian action was taken in the purchase of satellite equipment. Initially, goals were unclear and no input was collected from other levels of the organization. However, within the university a broad base had been gradually built both philosophically and physically for using telecommunications to extend the campus. Telecommunications programs to outreach sites were incorporated into the overall mission of the university rather than developed as independent self-supporting units. Initially there arose a great deal of resistance and resentment about using the satellite network with so little training, managerial support, or program support and with goals being undeveloped or unstated. The organization seemed to lack awareness, vision, and skill. In reviewing the adoption of communication technology for educational outreach, managerial decisions and preparation for new technology become crucial to success. Consider the revolutionary impact of technology defined broadly as (1) the technical equipment, (2) the human capacity to operate the technology, and (3) social arrangements and organization to make it useful.

This leads to discussion of the **critical blocks and/or facilitators** to successful change implementation. An extensive training component to accompany the new technology is requisite to the implementation of the new technology. The network was not useful until a major training effort began and TV production positions were created. Resources need to be developed for programming. Issues based programming with its concomitant requirements for multiple agencies, multidisciplines, immediacy and interaction find a nice partner in this new technology. Training of county faculty over the network instead of in face-to-face sessions offers cost savings.

Consider the **lasting results appearing over time and parallel developments.** The redistribution and reallocation of funds to use satellite

TV programming has been one result. The network still remains peripheral to much of the work of county agents who appear to have a minimal investment in its use. Many of the goals of the administration, to make extension more relevant in community development are yet to be realized since the change has occurred only at some levels and with some members of the organization. However there are several indications of some success with the change effort. Gradually, successful teleconference productions have brought broad recognition and developed partnerships with other parts of the university and other state agencies; more use is occurring. Training and managerial skill is developing and change seems to be filtering to more levels of the organization. As the organization acquires resources for specific programs, the organization's capacity to support satellite programming in general will grow. The development of a conceptual framework, a way of organizing rural delivery of programs may contribute to the social arrangements that make the technology useful. Applying this concept state wide may develop new relationships and attract new partners which will have lasting impact upon the relevance of the organization and future funding. **Having the technology in place may in fact be driving the organization toward more collaboration and cooperation with other institutions for the service of the common constituencies, the people.** The technology is certainly a tool for coordination with other programs---public schools, other colleges and with other units across campus. Program development is now broadening across the university using the network as one part of a distance delivery system and as evidence that the university can support rural community development.

Now we invite you to share observations about your own situations using these four elements (1) conditions for change, (2) manner of initiation, (3) road blocks or facilitators, and (4) lasting results. Using a forest as a metaphor, what were the preconditions of soil, water, sun for the seed of change to begin life? How did your change begin its growth? Was it a group effort, a single individual? Planned, or spontaneous? What rocks, pests, or deficiencies in the soil and environment interfered and what nutrients fed its growth and development? And what are the fruits that your change effort now bears? Or if you are planning a change, what key considerations or questions do the model and our experiences suggest to you?

Interpreting Organizational Change

Preconditions for change:

internal forces

external environment

How change introduced:

authoritarian

delegated

shared power

Lasting results appearing over time:

Parallel developments:

Factors blocking change effort:

Factors facilitating change effort:

Around each star record your thoughts about change efforts in your organization